



Universal Acceptance Day Uruguay - May 26, 2025

UA Day Approach in Africa

Dr. AbdulKarim Oloyede - (ICANN)

1. Introduction and Context

- Dr. Oloyede opened by thanking the organizers, especially Laura, for the invitation to speak at UA Day in Uruguay.
- He expressed a desire to be there in person and reflected on the significance of being part of a global conversation—even virtually.
- He emphasized that Universal Acceptance (UA) celebrates diversity: people look different, speak different languages, but all share one global internet.

2. The Essence of Universal Acceptance

- UA is not just technical—it's about identity, inclusion, and cultural affinity. Dr. Oloyede noted how speaking someone's native language creates instant connection.
- He highlighted that UA ensures everyone can use the internet in their native scripts and languages, not just in English or ASCII characters.

- He used his own local language, Yoruba, as an example of languages that should be included in domain names and email addresses.

3. The Internet and Language Barriers

- Current internet systems often exclude non-English scripts, creating barriers.
- UA seeks to eliminate this by supporting all languages and scripts in domain names and email addresses.
- He emphasized that this isn't just about convenience—it's about equity and digital rights.

4. Africa's Demographic and Digital Realities

- Africa is a vast and diverse continent with 54 countries and over 2,000 languages.
- 58% of its population lives in rural areas, where access to infrastructure, affordable internet, and energy remains a challenge.
- There is a digital divide between urban and rural communities.
- Despite these challenges, there is strong momentum in Africa toward digital inclusion and UA implementation.

5. African Engagement with UA

- Africa has held multiple UA Day events across the continent, including in:
 - **Nigeria:** Held its 2025 UA Day on May 20.
 - **Kenya, Namibia, and Niger:** Also hosted national UA Day events.
- These events promote awareness, technical training, and local content creation in native languages.

6. Overcoming Implementation Challenges

- A major issue is lack of awareness among developers and students about UA principles.
- Many still use outdated programming practices that only accommodate ASCII and 3-letter TLDs.
- Dr. Oloyede emphasized transitioning to modern standards like UTF-8 and building software that supports non-ASCII scripts.

7. Educational Reform and Curriculum Development

- A major success: creation of a UA-aligned computer science curriculum for African universities.
- This effort was launched at a multi-stakeholder summit held in Morocco two years prior.
- The revised curriculum ensures that new generations of African developers understand UA and are prepared to support it in their work.

8. Institutional and Policy Support

- Several African countries have integrated UA into their national ICT strategies.
- Notably, top-level domains such as **.za (South Africa)** and **.ng (Nigeria)** are already UA-compliant.
- These domains are examples of how African countries are taking ownership of digital sovereignty and inclusion.

9. Email Address Internationalization (EAI) and Local Content

- Dr. Oloyede noted the importance of not just domain names, but also email systems being able to support diverse scripts.
- Africa's multilingual context makes this essential: the goal is to ensure that people can use online services in languages like Yoruba, Amharic, Arabic, etc.

10. Vision for the Future and Global Solidarity

- The African vision for UA includes:
 - Inclusion of all scripts and languages in the domain name system.
 - Development of African-owned TLDs (e.g., **.Africa, Johannesburg, .Nigeria**).
 - Support for local script use in email, websites, and digital public services.
- Dr. Oloyede stressed the importance of cross-regional collaboration, especially between Africa and Latin America, to upgrade internet systems and push UA adoption worldwide.

11. Final Thoughts and Appeal

- He concluded with gratitude, saying "Muchas gracias" in Spanish to connect with the local audience.

- He reiterated that UA is a shared global mission and called on all participants to work together to ensure an inclusive internet for all.
- His core message: UA is not optional—it's essential for digital equity, cultural respect, and the true global nature of the internet.